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ABSTRACT

Because student-teacher conferences appear to be more effective than other methods of writing evaluation, a study was conducted to observe how students' writing changed over a semester and whether those changes were related to the conversations in student-teacher conferences. Two college freshman composition students--one strong and one weak writer--were observed during four conferences with their teacher. The topic of conversation was the basic unit of analysis. The number of times a topic was mentioned did not necessarily correspond to the proportion of the conference time devoted to the topic. The weak writer showed a preoccupation with mechanical errors, and the teacher worked to keep the focus off mechanics by trying to shorten the discussion of the issue each time the student brought it up. It was only by admitting the validity of the student's concern and suggesting a strategy for handling that concern that the teacher could finally focus on idea development. The stronger writer was concerned with generating ideas, while the teacher was concerned with organization. These two students had individual concerns while the teacher had similar but not identical concerns for each student. The teacher was able to converse with the stronger writer about shared concerns much earlier in the semester than with the weaker writer, indicating that shared concerns are at the base of effective teaching and learning. (HTH)

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Evaluation in the Writing Conference: An Interactive Process

Paper presented at the
Austin Conference on
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Today, I will examine the evaluation of student writing from the point of view of the teacher rather than from the point of view of the tester. I will ask what role evaluation plays in the effective teaching of writing. Past studies of teachers' written comments indicate that they generally do not provide much specific help for the student writer. Harris (1977) reports that teachers say they value content and organization over sentence structure and mechanics, but that they focus most of their written comments on issues of mechanics. Sommers (1981) also reports that most teacher comments focus on mechanical issues and that their other comments are vague and often send confusing or contradictory messages to students.

I will report preliminary results of a pilot study on evaluation in the student-teacher writing conference. I found that in the conference,evaluation, broadly defined, plays a significant role in teaching. In the conference, evaluation occurs in the following guises:

1. Teachers guide students to evaluate their own writing (self-evaluation). Such evaluation might occur in the conference itself and because of what happens in the conference, self-evaluation should become a more productive, more regular part of the student's composing process.
2. Teachers and students evaluate the writing process as well as the written product.
3. Teachers give substantive, formative evaluation throughout the writing process as well as summative evaluation or a

grade once the product is complete.

Conferences are an increasingly popular pedagogical setting for teaching writing. Indeed, at all levels of teaching writing, from elementary school through college, the conference is becoming more and more widely recognized as a central, if not the central, teaching event (Garrison, 1974; Blenski, 1976; Graves, 1980; Carnicelli, 1980). Evaluation defined as student and teacher response to the writing process and the written product is explicitly at the center of the pedagogy of the conference. As I said earlier, my goal in studying evaluation in the conference was really to study teaching. I chose to focus on the conference setting not only because it is a common and potentially very productive teaching setting but also because it involves only two participants, not a teacher and a class, just a teacher and a student. I felt that such a simple setting would provide a clear, clean window through which to view teaching and learning. I also felt that in the type of conference in which the student participates a great deal in the conversation, I would be able to analyze parts of the learning process and to see how learning and teaching interact. So I trained the teacher in my study to give coherent conferences in which the student played a significant role. As Ellen Nold (1981) argues, for conferences to be effective, the talk must not be dominated by the teacher and the conference must be coherent.

As a setting for teaching writing, the conference, I felt, held the most potential as a place where effective teaching and productive learning would occur. The student could understand the teacher's meaning more easily; the communication is oral rather than

written as it is when a teacher writes comments on a student's paper, and the oral conversation is only between two participants, unlike in the classroom where the teacher must attempt to communicate with many students at once. Therefore, I felt that this simpler communication situation, oral and one-to-one, held the most potential to be a productive learning situation, at least one in which the student would best be able to understand the teacher.

By studying the conference, I hoped to be able to trace how students changed across time: how they changed their writing, whether or not changes were related to talk in the conference. I also wondered how their conversations with their teacher changed--conversations both about their written products and about their writing process--and whether changes in talk would give clues about learning. I wondered whether conferences differed with weak and strong students and whether the type and amount of change differed for these students.

I began my study of conferences by looking at one teacher and her conferences with six different students across a semester's time. There were four conferences with each student, and all conferences took place as part of the natural course of instruction in a freshman writing class at San Francisco State University. Half of the students had low verbal ability (below 350 SAT-V) and half higher (above 500 SAT-V).

First, I will sketch briefly the analysis system and then I will compare the second conference of the semester for one of the weaker and for one of the stronger students in the class. Finally, I will explain how the weaker students' main concern, about her

grammar errors, develops through the semester and how her teacher responds to this concern.

To analyze the conference discourse, first two trained coders independently label the conversational "turns" in each conference (Sachs, Schegloff, and Jefferson, 1974; Freedman, 1980). By labeling turns, I am able to quantify the amount of talk during certain conversational sequences and to locate those sequences exactly in the data.

I chose the topic of conversation, a semantic concept, as the basic unit of analysis. Most past studies of oral discourse have had a structural rather than a semantic focus. For example, classroom language studies have uncovered structural units, such as Mehan's (1979) initiation-reply-evaluation sequence. Others, like Austin (1962) and Searle (1969), have examined speech acts, such as commands and pronouncements, questions and requests. Just as Mehan does not consider the substance of the reply, speech act theorists do not deal with the substance of the command or question.

Although a structural analysis of conference-talk is enlightening (Freedman, 1980), I felt that it would be useful also to organize the data into topics, to discover systematically what the key topics are. I felt that an identification of topics would prove useful in tracing the teaching and learning process. For <u>what</u> one teaches, the substance of the curriculum, the topics one covers, is just as important as <u>how</u> one structures the teaching. By analyzing topics, I hoped to discover how the teaching and learning process changes across time (do the central topics of conversation shift?), to see how conferences with different students vary (does the teacher talk

about different topics with different students?), and to form hypotheses about student writing, about what the student might do as a result of the conference (will the student develop a paper more fully after a long conference conversation about development?). After outlining what the topics of conversation are, I next explore the speech acts and other finer workings of the conversation within the key topics, to find out how the teacher teaches and how well the student understands.

My system for dividing the discourse into topics follows from two strains of past research: oral discourse analysis that mentions the importance of topic, and text analysis which organizes written texts and sometimes monologues into a hierarchy of propositions, akin to what I am defining here as topic. In oral discourse analysis, Mehan (1979), in his recent study of social structure of the classroom, found that as a teacher elicits information from students during the initiation phases of the instructional sequence, the "elicitation sequences are organized into larger units. And these units seem to be organized around topics" (p. 65). He calls these larger units "topically related sets." Chafe (1980), in his analysis of the "idea units" in story recalls, found that idea units could be grouped into larger units called "centers of interest." Sachs (1971) cited in Coulthard (1977) shows that topics of conversation drift from one to the next in a linear fashion.

Text analysts, like Kintsch (1974), Fredericksen (1975), and de Beaugrande (1980), on the other hand, have organized propositions or meaning units into hierarchical arrangements with some propositions subordinate to others. Likewise, I have found that topics in the

conference are arranged hierarchically. My analysis system captures both the linear and hierarchical arrangement of topics and takes for a topical unit something akin more to Chafe's "center of interest" than to his single "idea unit" or to the individual proposition.

The main topical segments of discourse at the top of the hierarchy of topics suggest the major divisions for the conference. In Table 1

- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

Insert Table 1 about here

- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

you can see how the boundaries between these major level 1 segments are marked in the discourse for one student conference. In this conference, there are four level one segments: this paper, the paper of Jean, another student in the class, general writing concerns, closing remarks. The next level topics also structure the conference by signaling the activity that is occurring: student self-evaluation, paper reading, teacher evaluation, and the like. Here, in order to examine the finer interactions between student and teacher, I will focus on the hierarchically lower level topics. For example, during the student self-evaluation event, talk may focus on such lower level topics as development of ideas, mechanical errors, or the students' insecurity as a writer.

From an analysis of several conferences, the lower level topics listed and defined in Table 2 have emerged. Each topic in the first

- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

Insert Table 2 about here

- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

group (1-5) can be discussed mainly in terms of the writing process, mainly in terms of the written product, or in terms of both the

TABLE 1

OPENINGS AND CLOSINGS OF MAIN CONFERENCE SEGMENTS

Opening SEGMENT 1 THIS PAPER	T1:	How did you feel about this paper?
	S1:	Horrible.
	T2:	You did?
	S2:	Well, see it was a rush job I did the night before it was due.
		. . .
Closing SEGMENT 1	S115:	I guess it (this paper) wasn't that bad then.
	T116:	Nuh huh. No. It wasn't. It wasn't.
	S116:	I feel like I was going to get a "D" or an "F."
	T117:	Oh no. Oh no.
	S117-1:	That's how much confidence I have in myself.
Opening SEGMENT 2 JEAN'S PAPER	S117-2:	And like Jean, when she received her essay, she couldn't believe she received an "A-," and she told me to read it and I read it, and it was good
	S117-3:	and as you said it needed more development
		. . .
Closing SEGMENT 2	S118-2:	And she had trouble spelling, uh, the, some of the words.
	S118-3:	She says, "Why are you so picky?" I said, "I guess I'm like that.
Opening SEGMENT 3 MY WRITING CONCERNS	S118-4:	Because I tend to look at things carefully and want to have it right.
	T119-1:	That's good, though.
	T119-2:	That's good because if you have a lot of technical errors /uh hum/ even if you have good ideas
		. . .
Closing SEGMENT 3	S139-2:	Do you have the sheet, one day I wasn't there, it was on a Wednesday, about your correction symbols?
		. . .

T145: These are the ones
that I put on papers
when, uh,
/uh huh/
you get an,
an essay marked
when it comes back to you
/okay/
without talking to me directly about it.
S145: Okay.
Yes,
there are some new marks
that I don't know about.
T146: Yeah.
S146-1: Okay.

pening
EGMENT 4
losing

S146-2: Well,
thank you very much.
T147: You're welcome.
.
.
.

Abbreviation Key:
T = teacher
S = student
numbers after T and S = conversational turn (defined by Sachs, Schegloff, and Jefferson, "A Simplest Systematics for the Organization of Turn-taking for Conversation," Language, 50, 669-735, 1974.)
subdivisions of turns made when topic shifts within a turn

Level II

List of level II events under first Level I (Segment 1: THIS PAPER). All level II events are subordinate to a level I segment.

1. Student self-evaluation - teacher initiated
OPENING: T1: How did you feel about this paper?

2. Read paper (continue self-evaluation in a slightly different context from above) - teacher initiated
OPENING: T38: Okay
Why don't, uhm,
just so that we're both real familiar with it
why don't you just quickly read through it
and then if there's any other points that you want to make about the essay
uhm
S38: Okay
T39: Go
feel free to stop and analyze it with me
you can read it out loud if you want

3. Teacher evaluation - <u>teacher initiated</u>

T65-2: You um,
this is uhm
a very strong essay
Uhm
I was pleased with it when I saw it.
Uhm,
you have a real clear thesis

4. Grading - <u>teacher initiated</u>

T108-7: But as far as a grade for an essay like this,
I think it's a,
in the B range
and I would uh
give it a B-

5. Return essay - <u>student initiated</u>

S109-2: Uhm
when
when am I going to get this essay back?

T110 : Right now.

TABLE 2

Lower Level Topics (Process and/or Product)

1. Argument- a) interpretation of ideas
   b) logic
   c) clarity

Example:
S 17-1: Then I went over from all this
(Jay) and wrote down little statements
Process about what my assumptions were.

2. Development- a) generate ideas
   b) add ideas
   c) delete ideas

Example:
S 1-2: I went to do the final draft
(Jay) and I realized I could do better.
You know,
even slightly
S 1-3: but just adding things on
Process more de-development
Product It's a big thing.

3. Organization- a) order ideas
   b) paragraph
   c) transition between ideas
   d) set up thesis statement, topic sentences to mark organization clearly

Example:
S 17-2: And then I put all my complaints in little categories
(Jay) that sort of fit together
Process

4. Sentence Style- (not errors) a) join sentences
   b) vary sentence structure
   c) make sentence focus concrete

Example:
S 56-3: Uh
(Jay) I don't know if it is right to say bus operator in one sentence
Product and bus driver in the next
(Unclear) variety.

5. Mechanics- a) verb tense
   b) reference
   c) punctuation
   d) spelling
   e) capitalization

Example:
S 3-2: And I feared there was a lot of little errors here and there
(Cee) and like I was reading my own copy about 15 minutes ago
Product to see how it was,
and there are a few errors I found
that should have been corrected before.

Process (Note: "invention" or "idea generation" falls under process of development)

6. Revision

Example: see first part of example #2

7. Transcription

Example

S5: ....
(Cee) but getting the ideas out
and putting out on the paper was hard to do.

S 7-2: I had a lot of ideas running through my mind
(Cee) but when I finally got to the nitty gritty
writing things down was hard.

process and the product, each orientation considered a separate topic. For example, I treat a discussion of development of the product as a separate topic from a discussion of development during the process or idea generation, invention. When the discussion of the process merges with the discussion of the product, I code the topic as a process topic and as a product topic.

In Table 2, I have given a brief definition of each category, and I have given examples of conference-talk that I label product orientation, process orientation and a mixture of the two. For an example of a product orientation, notice Cee's, the weaker student's, discussion of her mechanics (#5).

Cee says, "And I feared there was a lot of little errors here and there and like I was reading my own copy about 15 minutes ago to see how it was, and there are a few errors I found that should have been corrected before." Here, even though Cee mentions that she notices her errors while going through the process of reading her paper, Cee is looking at her finished product, which incidentally she does not change even though she recognizes that it contains errors. She tells the teacher a fact that she knows about her product. She does not discuss either her process of creating her errors or her process of correcting the errors.

Number 3, organization, shows a discussion of Jay's which is process-oriented. Jay, the stronger student, describes his organizational process for the paper under discussion: "And then I put all my complaints in little categories that sort of fit together." Here, obviously, he does not comment on the organization of his written product.

Number 2, development, exhibits a discussion in which Jay is referring to his process and his product "I went to do the final draft and I realized I could do better, you know, even slightly but just adding things on more de-development. It's a big thing." At this point Jay is discussing his discovery of his lack of sufficient development in his draft. Jay's discovery is much like Cee's discovery that she had "errors. . .that should have been corrected before." However, Cee makes apologies for what she considers her final product and does nothing about her discovery. Jay, on the other hand, describes a discovery he made when he went to do his "draft"; and he implies here and later indicates that his discovery led him to make changes before he typed his version that he has just presented to the teacher. So Jay's topic of development concerns a discovery that he made during his writing process and results in a change in his final product.

The last couple of topics, 6 and 7, --revision and transcription--can only be process topics. However, these topics may accompany other process or product topics. In fact, in the example under number 2, before Jay discusses development, he discusses his revision process: "I went to do the final draft and I realized I could do better. You know even slightly."

Besides the topics listed in Table 2, I have found that frequently during a conference several topics will surface that are peculiar to a particular student and that are not necessarily related to the written product or the writing process. Such topics, in fact, may or may not influence writing. An example of such a

topic is Cee's distrust of teachers which surfaces during her first conference of the semester.

An analysis of these lower level topics of conversation can reveal systematically how the substance of different conferences differ. By using such an analysis, I can address those questions that bear on the teaching and learning of writing: Does the teacher discuss different topics with different students? Do the student's and teacher's topics of discussion change across time? Do the topics of conversation shift in ways that indicate that the student is making progress?

Next, I will compare the topics of discussion in the second conference of the semester for Cee, the weaker student, and for Jay, the stronger student. In Table 3, I have grouped for each student,

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Insert Table 3 about here

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the topics from the second conference of the semester into categories, according to whether they were initiated mostly by the teacher, mostly by the student, or more or less equally by both the teacher and the student. In an earlier analysis of this data, I showed that students have main concerns in a conference which they express over and over again to their teachers much like psychiatric patients in talks with their psychiatrists repeat their main concerns over and over again (Freedman, 1979; Freedman, 1980). With the current analysis system, I account for repeated teacher concerns as well as repeated student concerns.

Those topics that are starred in the chart on Table 3 are the

TABLE 3

Topics

	Jay (stronger student)	Cee (weaker student)
Teacher topics	***organization (product) argument (product) revision (process) sentence style (product) mechanics (product)	**development (product) *argument (product) organization (product)
Student topics	*development (process)	***mechanics (product) transcribing (process)
Student and teacher topics	**development (product) argument (process) organization (process)	development (process) revision (process)

*** - topic initiated most

** - topic initiated second most

* - topic initiated third most

topics that were mentioned more times than any others during the conference, the more stars, the higher the number of mentions. The number of different mentions does not necessarily correspond to the proportion of conference time devoted to a given topic. As a matter of fact, in Cee's conference the student keeps bringing up her concerns with mechanics but the teacher is not very interested in pursuing this topic. So the teacher works to keep the focus off of mechanics by trying to shorten the discussion on this issue; thus, in order to be able to talk about her mechanics, Cee must keep bringing the issue up. I plan to calculate the amount of time spent on these topics to supplement this information about the number of times the topic is brought up for discussion. But I do not yet have these calculations.

Most interesting is the difference in the substance of the topics and the difference in who brings up which topics for the two students. Based on the topics the students initiate, one can see that the students are clearly concerned with different issues. Jay has problems generating ideas. He is not at all concerned with mechanics. In an earlier conference he mentioned that in high school he once did very poorly in an English class because he did not turn in a paper because he couldn't decide what to include in it. Even for the paper under discussion at this conference, he went to see the teacher earlier during his writing process to get help generating ideas. And still, during this conference, idea

generation is the one topic that Jay wants most to discuss. Furthermore, with the teacher, Jay explores the effectiveness of his idea generation on the development of his product, a separate topic but a related concern. In Jay's conference, the topic most initiated is one by the teacher, on the organization of the product. She brings up a new problem for him to consider.

In Cee's conference, on the other hand, it is a student topic, mechanics, rather than a teacher topic, that receives the most mention. The other two topics that receive a lot of focus are both teacher topics: development of the product and the clarity of the argument. This teacher focus on the clarity of Cee's ideas is a topic that logically should precede talk about the organization of the ideas, something the teacher is able to cover in Jay's conference but not in Cee's. The teacher's concern with development carries across both conferences.

The substance of Cee's concern with mechanics and the way the teacher interacts with Cee to handle this concern raise some interesting pedagogical issues. In Table 4 I trace Cee's concern with

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Insert Table 4 about here

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mechanics across the semester. Cee first articulates this concern early during her first conference of the semester. Later during this first conference Cee and the teacher discuss how Cee's concern with mechanics affects or really blocks Cee during her writing process. In A on Table 4 Cee says, "See I saw a lot of things when I was doing the rewrite but I just couldn't put

TABLE 4

Cee's Developing Concern about Mechanics

A. Conference I--Cee admits the effect of her concern with error on her process and produc

S: See I saw a lot of things when I was doing the rewrite.
But I just couldn't put it down into words.

T: Um, that's interesting.
Did you make any, uhm
kind of outline on the side
trying to get your ideas plugged into an organization?

S: Uhm hum.
But it just didn't work.
I wrote a few things that aren't complete sentences.
That's the problem.
See if I thought they were complete sentences,
I would of probably put them in the essay.

T: Oh,
I see.
So you took out some of your examples because you felt that the writing,
it was a fragment rather than a complete sentence.

S: Uh hum.

T: Okay,
so sometimes you avoid writing certain ideas?

S: Uh hum.

T: Because you're afraid that the unit isn't a complete thought.

S: Right.

T: Okay.
That's interesting.
That will make a big difference in your writing so that
yeah, uhm,
its important that,
that you get that confidence in your writing
so that you can incorporate ideas

S: Right.

T: and develop your ideas.

B. Investigator-Student Interview--early in the semester. Cee describes her strategies.

S: Writing out chunks
and in different orders,
no matter what
and then I start working on some of them,
on one idea
and start developing
but it's kinda hard to develop one point.

I: Cee, when you're writing all this stuff down in chunks,
do you worry about how you're writing it down?
Do you worry about your grammar and your sentence structure then?

S: I worry about it then
because I want to make it perfect at the beginning.
That way I won't have to worry in the middle or at the end.

C. Conference III--Cee reveals another way her problem with mechanics hinders her composing

S: Well,
see,
I had things running through my mind then,
Oh, I'm going to write that down.
Then when I start to write it down
it doesn't come out the way I was thinking about it.
And it comes out all awkward
and I try to get it back
what I thought of before,
but then I can't think of what it was.

D. Conference III--Cee acknowledges that she is gaining some control over her errors.
The teacher shifts the topic away from error to development.

T: How do you feel your writing is coming as we go throughout the semester?

S: I notice that I don't make so many of these little errors I made before
like I notice where I should put my commas
and where apostrophe's should go
and little things,
but like the major
like sentence structuring
I still have trouble putting my thoughts into words
or print actually
:
:

S: They (high school teachers) didn't really tell us how to write it out smoothly
without making real errors here and there.

T: Okay.
Okay.
Uhm,
so feel then,
I guess,
a way,
you know better how to develop

S: Uh hum.

T: your ideas.
Okay.

S: I feel much better now.

E. Conference IV--Cee, with her teacher's help, discovers a strategy for gaining control over her problems with error.

T: Do you feel like you could write three paragraphs then about that?

S: I think I can.

T: Yeah,
I mean you were talking it out.

S: Yeah.

T: You were saying a lot of stuff.

S: But it,
it's easier to talk it out than write it down on a piece of paper.

T: When you go back,
try to pretend like you're talking it out on paper.
You know.

S: You talk to the paper.

T: It's my belief
yeah
say it's my belief that in this picture

S: Uh hum.

T: And start out that way,
then you can cross off those extra words.
Remember how Trimble suggests /Okay/
that you do that /Yeah/
Just talk.
Pretend like you're explaining to a friend.

S: No,
it's much more different talking to a friend
because you can put in your own ideas.
You don't have to watch out too much about the little grammar errors or spelling errors or anything like that.
Just say right out
or you could maybe exaggerate a little bit more,
and everything's just flowing right out.
Put when you're talking on,
to a piece of paper,
you're talking,
but then you might forget something
or you might all of a sudden change it.
Because I have a habit of changing everything in mid air.
Like I might have an essay al-almost done to type up
and then maybe one or two days before it's due,
I change the whole essay /Uh hum./
or go to a new topic because I don't like the form of my essay.

T: Okay.
Uhm
the only thing I can say about that is that if
if it would help you get ideas on to the paper /Uh hum./
to think you were talking, /Yeah./
let those grammar errors come out
and then when you do your editing /Uh hum./
you can go back and correct it at a different stage.
So the point I just wanted to make for you was that I,
that it's possible,
maybe,
now maybe you're,
you're saying that just the speech and putting anything down on paper is really different.

S: Oh yeah.

T: Uhm,
which it is to a degree,
but sometimes if people feel like they're just writing to a friend
or they're explaining something to /Uh hum/ their audience is somebody that's a friend
and they're writing out their ideas /Uh hum./
they can get more out on paper
and it flows more smoothly.

S: Like I was writing to a friend recently.
And I was telling him about the BART.
I said I'm crazy about BART.
And I was just telling all these little things
and how they're having fights in Daly City
and it really came out.
So maybe I should pretend that I'm writing to somebody about the M & M's ad.

T: Yeah do.
Um,
pretend like you and I are,
are old buddies and I happen to be in the business now of,
producing M & M's
and you're the president of another corporation/Uh hum./
of an advertising corporation
and you're just explaining to me about this ad,
and then in your editing stage,
later,
once you get all your ideas out

S: Yeah.

T: Then go back and look at the grammar,
but don't worry about that when you're getting your ideas on the paper.

S: I think that's what I do.
I worry too much about the grammar
and how it comes out the first time around,
and maybe that's the main cause that I worry about that too much,
that I don't really worry about how the paper would turn out in the sense of is this the right ideas,
will the reader find that she can relate to this ad,
can she visualize the picture?

T: Yeah,
those are really important considerations.
If you realize that now,

S: Uh hum.

T: you've realized a big thing.

it down into words." The teacher asks whether Cee used an outline, and after Cee says that didn't work,

she continues, "I wrote a few things that aren't complete sentences. That's the problem. See if I thought they were complete sentences, I would of probably put them in the essay." The teacher confirms with Cee that she actually leaves out ideas if she is unhappy with the form she puts them in. The teacher gives no direction other than that she thinks that Cee would improve her writing if "you get that confidence in your writing so that you can incorporate ideas." The teacher listens but makes no serious attempt to deal with Cee's concern. How will Cee gain confidence?

In an interview with me and Jo Keroes, a colleague who was helping with this research, Cee reveals that she begins to worry about her grammar quite early in her writing process. In B she describes her composing process, writing out chunks and getting out ideas in different orders; then, when asked whether she worries about grammar and sentence structure at this point, she says, "I worry about it then because I want to make it perfect at the beginning. That way I won't have to worry in the middle or at the end." Her strategy seems to be to handle all parts of the composing process simultaneously and to avoid revision at all costs, even at the cost of cognitive overload early in her process.

In her third conference with her teacher, Cee reveals that her concern with how awkwardly a given idea looks on the page makes her forget what she wants to say next. In C she says, "Well see I had things running through my mind then, oh, I'm going to write that down. Then when I start to write it down it doesn't come out the

way I was thinking about it. And it comes out all awkward and I try to get it back what I thought of before but then I can't think of what it was."

These three episodes and tne topic analysis of the second conference present the portrait of a writer who:

1. is concerned with error,
2. is concerned, perhaps inappropriately early in her process,
3. is so concerned that she cannot get her ideas out (forgets what comes next), and
4. is so concerned that she omits other ideas that she fears aren't expressed correctly.

Given such knowledge about a student, a teacher could make several different pedagogical choices. She could try to teach Cee to control her errors. If Cee perceived that she had gained the control she desires, she would no longer feel insecure and blocked. But if Cee perceived she did not gain control, the teacher's focus on error could make the issue seem even more important to Cee and Cee might get even more blocked.

Alternatively, the teacher could emphasize her own lack of concern with error and could try to get Cee to adopt her values, something the teacher appears to be doing in much of conference II. But Cee fights the teacher at every step, bringing up mechanics as a topic of conversation whenever she can.

Third, the teacher could work with Cee on her strategies, helping Cee get out her thoughts first and ther go back to correct her grammar. Such a tactic includes the first two, for the teacher must teach control over mechanics so the student will know what to do when she goes back to edit. Also, the teacher must place this teaching in a context that shows it in relation to other problems

in Cee's writing so that Cee will be willing to correct her errors later in her process. Ann Brown's recent work with poor readers suggests that they improve as readers after being trained in strategies that will allow them to learn from text (1980). I hypothesize that writers like Cee also will need to be taught strategies that will allow them to create better texts.

In the third conference of the semester Cee indicates that she has acquired some control over her grammar (see D in Table 4) when Cee says, "I notice that I don't make so many of these little errors I made before." Also, during this discussion, the teacher tries to shift the topic from error to development, her agenda in the second conference. She says, after quite a few speech hesitations, "you know better how to develop." Cee responds with the vague nonsequitor, "I feel much better now." About her problem with errors or her problem with development or neither or both? We cannot tell.

Finally, in the last conference of the semester the teacher admits the validity of Cee's concern with error and realizes that she must do something other than ignore the concern. She helps Cee understand a strategy that may help her deal with error in her writing. In E on Table 4 the teacher begins:

T: Yeah do.
Um,
pretend like you and I are,
are old buddies and I happen to be in the business now of,
producing M & M's
and you're the president of another corporation/Uh hum./
of an advertising corporation
and you're just explaining to me about this ad,
and then in your editing stage,
later,
once you get all your ideas out

S: Yeah.

T: Then go back and look at the grammar,
but don't worry about that when you're getting your ideas on the paper.

S: I think that's what I do.
I worry too much about the grammar
and how it comes out the first time around,
and maybe that's the main cause that I worry about that too much,
that I don't really worry about how the paper would turn out in the sense of is this the right ideas,
will the reader find that she can relate to this ad,
can she visualize the picture?

T: Yeah,
those are really important considerations.
If you realize that now,

S: Uh hum.

T: you've realized a big thing.

It is through the teacher's admission of the validity of Cee's concern with mechanics and the suggestion of a strategy for handling the concern that Cee is able to hear the teacher's concern with development of ideas.

An analysis of these lower level topics of conversation during the conference shows the main substantive pedagogical areas of interest or concerns, both for the teacher and the student. These two students, Cee and Jay, have different concerns while the teacher has similar but not identical concerns for each student. The teacher and Jay, the stronger student, converse about shared concerns beginning early in the semester. With the weaker student, it takes almost a full semester for the teacher and student to begin to converse. Shared concerns, I hypothesize, are at the base of effective teaching and learning. The teacher must guide some students carefully to get them to share her concerns. Such guidance is a critical part of teaching. Furthermore, in teaching writing, teachers need

to help students acquire not only knowledge but also strategies for using that knowledge.

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